

WHAT TIME IS CHRISTMAS FOR?

Luke 2:8-11

2 Christmas Funnies

1. Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men?

- They would have asked for directions and so arrived on time to help with the birth;
- They would have cleaned up the stable and cleared out those unhygienic animals;
- They would have brought practical gifts AND a casserole for supper.

2. At an east London nativity play all was going well until the angel appeared and told the little girl playing Mary that she was going to have a baby. "But how can this be?" said Mary, "Since I am a Viking?"

Intro

Scientists tell us that for those of us who live north of the equator, the longest night of the year is December 21 -- the winter solstice. But any child knows that the longest night of the year is not December 21st. It's Christmas Eve, December 24. I remember as a kid, I used to ask my parents many times, "Is it Christmas time yet?"

What time is Christmas? The Bible says that God specifically chose the time when Jesus Christ would come to earth. It was not an accident. In history, He specifically chose that time as the time for Jesus' birth.

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* God waited until just the right time to send Jesus Christ.

What time is Christmas this year? The answer to that question is found in the three statements the angels gave to the shepherds at the very first Christmas. There are three things that the angels said that we're to do at Christmas.

1. Christmas is time to release my fears
2. Christmas is time to renew my faith.
3. Christmas is time to rebuild relationships.

1. CHRISTMAS IS TIME TO RELEASE MY FEARS.

What are you worried about? The economy? Your health? Bills? Your kids? What are you worried about? The first thing the angel says is this: "Don't be afraid! Release your anxiety. Let go of your fear!" Luke 2:10 *"An angel appeared to the shepherds and they were terrified. But the angel said, 'Do not be afraid!'"*

There are 365 "*Fear not's*" in the Bible, one for every day of the year. It's interesting that most times when God talks to somebody in the Bible; the first thing He says is "*Don't be afraid!*" Why? Perhaps some people are afraid of God. If you're talking in a conversation and you bring up God, notice how people tense up. They get nervous when you mention the Lord. All of a sudden they're uptight. Why? They're afraid of God. You don't need to be afraid of God.

Why are we afraid? We're afraid of what the future holds. Christmas comes at the end of one year and the beginning of the next. You don't know what the future holds. There are a lot of reasons to be afraid. But God says at Christmas time, "*Don't be afraid!*" Life is just exchanging one set of problems for another set of problems. God says, don't be afraid. It's time to release your fears.

2. CHRISTMAS IS TIME TO RENEW MY FAITH.

The reality of Christmas is not Rudolph or Santa or Frosty or Scrooge or Homer Simpson's Christmas or anybody else's Christmas. The reality of Christmas is Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:10 "*I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone!*" "Joyful news". The Greek work means "Good news!" Great news, Fantastic news. Christmas is Good news.

The Good News keeps getting better and better because the bad news keeps getting worse and worse. The contrast between what you see on TV and what you hear at the church or read in the Bible is so different. The Good News keeps getting better especially in times of darkness.

Christmas is a time to renew your faith. What is the Good News?

1/ You matter to God. God knows everything about you -- the good, the bad, and the ugly -- and He still loves you. You matter to Him. He cares about you. He knows everything about you.

2/ You are not an accident. I don't care what the circumstances of your birth are, you weren't made by accident. God has a plan and a purpose for your life. Meaning and satisfaction come when I discover God's purpose for my life and get right in the center of it. This is it! This is what I was made to be! Here's my niche. Here's what I was created for. And it feels good.

3/ God wants you to know Him. God knows everything about you. He wants you to know Him so He sent Jesus Christ so you could know what He's like. If God wanted to relate to birds, He would have become a bird. If God had wanted to communicate to cows, He would have become a cow. But God wanted to relate to you and to me, so He became like us -- a human being.

Jesus came to earth so we can know what He's like. He brings us Good News. God wants you to know Him. God's gift to you is personal. He cared enough to send the best. He came Himself. He didn't send an angel. He came Himself.

"I bring you good news and it is for everybody." You may be religious or not. It doesn't matter what your religious background is. God did not come to give you religion. He came to give you a relationship.

Christmas is not a religion. Christmas is God saying, "I want to relate to you. I want you to know Me." That's joyful news. It's good news! Christmas is a time to release my fear, renew my faith.

3. CHRISTMAS IS TIME TO REBUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

It's a time of reconciliations. Luke 2:14 "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*" God wants you to not only have peace with Him but He wants you to have peace with other people too.

Peanuts cartoon: Lucy says to Charlie Brown, "Charlie Brown, it's the Christmas season. I think we ought to bury our differences, forgive each other and try to be kind and get along." Charlie Brown

says, "Great! But why just this season? Why not all year?" Lucy says, "What do you think I am some kind of fanatic?"

Holiday seasons, often rather than promoting harmony are often a time of conflict. You see relatives that you don't particularly like. All families have difficulties. There's jealousies, grudges, resentment, misunderstanding.

Who do you need to reach out to this Christmas? Who do you need to write a letter to, make a call to? Who do you need to offer forgiveness to? Who do you need to ask forgiveness from and restore relationships?

What's the key to happy relationships? *"If we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other."* When Christ is in me and Christ is in you, then Christ isn't going to argue with Christ. We're never going to have peace on earth until the Prince of Peace reigns in everybody's heart. We need to rebuild relationships.

Each of us came here today for different reasons. Some of you came because family or a friend invited you. I don't care why you think you came here to church today. You're not here by accident. God brought you here for a purpose. He brought you here to say this to you, "Don't waste this Christmas."

It's time to release your fears. Let go and let God handle that problem you've been worried about. Just say, "I'm going to let go of it and give this problem to You, Lord."

It's time to renew your faith. Good News. God says *"I love you. I made you. You matter to Me. I want you to know Me."* That's good news! Renew your faith. Come back to God.

And it's time to rebuild relationships. Why don't you start by establishing the most important relationship? That's the one between you and God.

Ultimately, Christmas is a time for you to meet Christ. How crazy to celebrate Christmas without even knowing the one we celebrate! That's illogical, it doesn't make sense.

"It is time for you to turn to Christ, and He will come and pour out blessings upon you." It's time for you to turn to Christ.

Perhaps some of you this Christmas season need to come Home at last to God. You've been thinking about it. You've lived this past year apart from Christ and it's frustrating. You run out of energy. Maybe you've drifted away from God in the past months or the past years -- for a long time. Now is the time to come back home. Come back home to God at Christmas. Let Jesus Christ be your Savior and Lord.

Have you ever thought why we call the wise men, wise? Because they were seekers. They said, "We're going to check this thing out. What is this star? We're going to find out, who is Christ?" They were willing to do whatever it cost to check it out.

If you're a seeker, I invite you to seek Christ this Christmas. Receive God's gift of Jesus Christ this Christmas and it will make all the difference in the world.